

* THE STUDY OF THE CLASSICS.

THE study of the Classics, about which I am asked to say something to the Association, is, I fear, an exhausted theme. There is really not very much to be added to what Milton said two hundred and fifty years ago.

The world has been moving rapidly during the last half century in this as in other respects. In my boyhood the Classics were the education of the wealthy class in England. Even Mathematics were not a part of our regular school work, but an extra. The Mathematical teacher was not one of the regular staff; the members of the staff wore academical gowns and to them the boys took off their hats. It was said that when the Mathematical Master on his appointment asked the Provost whether he was to wear a gown, the reply was, "That is as *you* please." He then asked whether the boys were to take off their hats to him; the reply was, "That is as *they* please." Our curriculum in the Upper School, that is for three, four or even five years, was the same. The Iliad, the Æneid, Horace, a book of Greek prose extracts with a good deal of Lucian in it, a book of Greek poetic extracts with a good deal of Apollonius Rhodius in it, and a book of Latin prose extracts of a better kind. We said all the poetry afterwards by heart. The Iliad was our great book. It left its trace on character. Matthew Arnold has a story of an aged Grandee who, being asked to go on an arduous diplomatic mission from which he thought he would never return, made up his wavering mind in favour of public duty by recalling the words of a hero in Homer. The sixth form read part of a Greek play once a week with the head master. We read other Classics in the pupil rooms of our tutors, in which relation each of the

Masters stood out of school to a certain number of boys. For the New-castle Scholarship and Medal, for which we annually competed in Classics, we studied by ourselves; and some boys before they left Eton had made the acquaintance of a very respectable number of authors. Each boy had a room to himself, and everything favoured voluntary study. Great stress was laid on Greek and Latin composition, especially on the writing of Latin verses, an accomplishment which will probably soon be extinct; but in Eton in my day was the passport to the greatest honour, and was really carried to a high point for boys, as a glance at the Musæ Etonenses will show. Thus was trained the brilliant genius of Canning, and other scholar-statesmen of that stamp. But all that belongs to a past age; to the age of old Provost Goodall with his wig, knee-breeches and buckles, who, by his command of the Eton influence, turned the Great Western Railway out of its course, and, as it was said, when the mail came by railroad, would never have his letters brought before the time at which they ought to have come by coach. More than two generations have passed since in that old school-yard, when we assembled before school round the statue of our founder, Henry the Sixth, and where the forms of distinguished visitors were often seen, I took the hand of Napoleon's Marshal Soult and gazed on the Olympian brow of Daniel Webster. Eton is now reformed. Mathematics have been promoted to their proper place; science has been introduced. The life of an Eton boy has

* The address of Dr. Goldwin Smith, the Honorary President, delivered before the Classical Association of Ontario, on April 6th, 1893.